

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1519

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, March 21, 2011

Title: An act relating to school assessments for students with cognitive disabilities.

Brief Description: Regarding school assessments for students with cognitive disabilities.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education Appropriations & Oversight (originally sponsored by Representatives Hope, Dunshee, Anderson, Haler, Pettigrew, Fagan, Sells, Johnson, Orwall, Haigh, Kenney, Kelley and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/02/11, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/17/11, 3/21/11 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Harper, Vice Chair; Litzow, Ranking Minority Member; Eide, Fain, Hill, Hobbs, King, Nelson, Rockefeller and Tom.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS) is the statewide assessment for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) used to comply with the testing requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act. A student's IEP team, using established criteria, decides whether a student will participate in the general student assessment system or if the student will participate in the WAAS. The WAAS includes accommodations for students and different assessment instruments, including the WAAS portfolio, which is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The portfolio assessment is a collection of student work aligned to specific skills or targets that a student demonstrates in a classroom setting.

There is no limit on the number of students in a district to whom the WAAS can be administered. However, no more than 1 percent of the student population at a specific grade level in the state and 1 percent of the student population being tested in a specific grade in a district who successfully pass the WAAS can be counted for federal Adequate Yearly Progress purposes.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: Legislative findings are made about the challenges of assessing students with the most significant cognitive disabilities using state assessment systems.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must continue to work with teachers and others in special education programs to develop and implement a process to transition from the current portfolio assessment for students with significant cognitive challenges to a performance task-based assessment. In the meantime, within existing resources, OSPI must also coordinate efforts to:

- align academic goals in a student's IEP with the current assessment system by identifying detailed statewide alternate achievement benchmarks for use by teachers;
- develop a transparent and reliable scoring process;
- efficiently use technology; and
- develop a sensible approval process to shorten the time involved in developing and collecting assessment data.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill acknowledges the significant challenges for states to include students with severe cognitive disabilities in their student assessment systems. The current portfolio assessment is incredibly time consuming and does not provide meaningful information about the student. Educators and families want a meaningful assessment for these students. The current grade level tasks that are required by the assessment do not match the student IEPs because these students are working on functional and life skills, not grade level skills. A change to this assessment will save time that is now wasted on the assessment and provide greater time for student instruction. Other states have made these changes, and they have been accepted by the federal government.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Hope, prime sponsor; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Elaine Hogg, Auburn High School; Emma Packard, Troy Welker, Snohomish School District; Paula Wood, Bremerton School District; Doug Gill, OSPI; Pat Steinburg, Washington State Special Education Coalition.